

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 114445 TOSEC 040330
ORIGIN NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 114445 TOSEC 040330

FOR ATHERTON FROM NEA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT US IS

SUBJECT: THE FORMATION OF THE NEXT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

1. FOLLOWING IS OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE RANGE OF
COALITION POSSIBILITIES.

2. WITH 60 PERCENT OF THE VOTE COUNTED (2 P.M. ISRAEL TIME)
THE ELECTION RESULTS WERE:

LIKUD	41
LABOR ALIGNMENT	33
DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE	14
NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY	12
RAKAH (COMMUNIST--MAINLY ARAB)	6
THE 2 AGUDAH PARTIES (EXTREME ORTHODOX)	5
SHELI (EXTREME LEFT)	2

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 114445 TOSEC 040330

SHLOMZION (ARIK SHARON - FAR RIGHT)	2
FLATO-SHARON (FOR CHEAP HOUSING)	2
INDEPENDENT LIBERAL PARTY	1
CITIZENS RIGHTS MOVEMENT	1
UNITED ARAB LIST (ALIGNMENT AFFILIATE)	1

3. THE RANGE OF COALITION POSSIBILITIES ARE:

A. NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT: THE TERM MEANS A COALITION MAINLY OF THE ALIGNMENT AND LIKUD AND IN ALL LIKELIHOOD INCLUDING THE NRP. THE LIKUD AND NRP WILL SEEK THIS, AND LABOR WILL PROBABLY REFUSE IT, PARTICULARLY IF LIKUD CANNOT FORM A COALITION WITHOUT IT.

B. RIGHTWING GOVERNMENT: IF THE ABOVE ELECTION RESULTS HOLD--AND IF ANYTHING LIKUD MAY PICK UP ONE OR TWO MORE SEATS--LIKUD COULD PUT TOGETHER A COALITION COMPRISING THE NRP, THE TWO AGUDAH PARTIES, SHLOMZION, AND POSSIBLY FLATO SHARON. IT WOULD HAVE A SLIM MAJORITY, AND THE LIBERAL PARTY FACTION WITHIN LIKUD WOULD BE MOST UNCOMFORTABLE WITH ITS STRONGLY RELIGIOUS COLORATION AND WOULD PRESS HARD FOR LIKUD TO PURSUE A BROADER COALITION. NEVERTHELESS, THE VERY POSSIBILITY THAT LIKUD COULD RULE WITHOUT INCLUDING MODERATE ELEMENTS IN ITS COALITION SHOULD STRENGTHEN ITS HAND IN RESISTING COMPROMISES ON ISSUES WHEN NEGOTIATING A BROADER COALITION.

C. LIKUD-NRP-DMC GOVERNMENT: WHEN, AS SEEMS LIKELY, LIKUD GIVES UP ITS PURSUIT OF A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT, IT IS LIKELY TO SEEK A COALITION WITH BOTH THE NRP, WHICH WOULD BE GLAD TO JOIN WITH IT, AND THE DMC, WHICH IS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO REQUIRING AGREEMENT ON ITS REFORMIST PLATFORM AS A PRE-CONDITION TO JOINING ANY COALITION. LIKUD WOULD WANT TO HAVE THE DCM IN A COALITION TO (A) ASSURE A COMFORTABLE MAJORITY AND (B) ENABLE ITS LIBERAL PARTY FACTION FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE IDEOLOGICALLY. LIKUD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 114445 TOSEC 040330

WOULD FIND IT EXTREMELY HARD TO ACCEPT THE DMC REFORMIST PLATFORM IN TOTO, BUT THAT IS A POSSIBILITY; MORE SERIOUS COULD BE AN INSISTENCE BY THE DMC ON A SOFTENING OF THE LIKUD POSITION ON ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE ISSUES. WHILE THE DMC PLATFORM ON THOSE ISSUES IS VAGUE, MANY OF ITS HIGHLY IDEALISTIC LEADERS FEEL STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF A MORE MODERATE APPROACH THAN LIKUD'S AND THIS COULD PROVE A FATAL STICKING POINT. IF NEVERTHELESS A LIKUD-NRP-DMC GOVERNMENT WERE FORMED, ITS INTERNAL IDEOLOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS MIGHT MAKE IT HIGHLY UNSTABLE.

D. LABOR-NRP-DMC GOVERNMENT: IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT AFTER WEEKS OF WRANGLING, LIKUD MIGHT BE ABLE TO FORM NO COALITION AND THAT THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL MIGHT THEN CALL ON LABOR TO TRY. LABOR WOULD NEED THE NRP AND DMC, GIVING ITS COALITION ABOUT 59 SEATS, PLUS AT LEAST TWO MORE SEATS DRAWN FROM TINY MODERATE PARTIES (ILP, CRM, AND UAL WOULD BE POSSIBILITIES). LABOR HAS RULED TOGETHER WITH THE NRP CONTINUOUSLY UNTIL LAST DECEMBER, BUT THE

STEADILY HARDENING STANCE OF THE NRP FAVORING ANNEXATION OF THE WEST BANK PRODUCED A CREEPING FOREIGN POLICY PARALYSIS IN 1975-1976 AND WOULD BE AN OBSTACLE IN WORKING OUT A NEW COALITION AGREEMENT. NRP HAS GIVEN TOP PRIORITY TO A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT AND HAS CONCLUDED AN AGREEMENT WITH LIKUD THAT NEITHER WILL JOIN A COALITION WITHOUT THE OTHER. FURTHERMORE, YADIN FEELS A STRONG ANTIPATHY FOR THE NRP. THE DMC AND ALIGNMENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD NOT FIND IT ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT TO REACH COALITION TERMS.

E. NO GOVERNMENT: REALISING THAT IT MAY NOT HAVE AS GOOD A CHANCE TO FORM THE GOVERNMENT NEXT TIME AROUND, LIKUD IS UNLIKELY TO ALLOW THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SLIP THROUGH ITS FINGERS, AND WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PUT TOGETHER A SOLID MAJORITY COALITION. NEVERTHELESS, THE POSSIBILITY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 114445 TOSEC 040330

EXISTS THAT ONE OR ANOTHER OF ITS APPARENTLY COMPATIBLE COALITION PARTNERS WILL REFUSE TO COOPERATE AND LABOR WILL RESIST APPEALS FOR NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT, WHILE BEING UNABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT ON ITS OWN. IN THIS SITUATION, WHICH WE REGARD AS UNLIKELY, NO GOVERNMENT COULD BE FORMED AND NEW ELECTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE CALLED, PROBABLY WITHIN SIX MONTHS.

4. IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT FORMULATION OF A GOVERNMENT WILL PROCEED ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING TIME-TABLE, POSSIBLY EXTENDING OVER MANY WEEKS:

A. OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS MAY BE POSTED AT ANY TIME FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THE COUNT BUT NO LATER THAN TWO WEEKS AFTER THE ELECTION.

B. THE PRESIDENT BEGINS HIS FORMAL CONSULTATIONS WITH PARTY LEADERS AS SOON AS THE RESULTS ARE OFFICIALLY PUBLISHED.

C. THE NEW KNESSET CONVENES ON THE SECOND MONDAY FOLLOWING POSTING (NO LATER THAN JUNE 13).

D. AFTER ELECTION OF KNESSET SPEAKER AS FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS, PRESIDENT CHOOSES A KNESSET MEMBER TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, IN THIS CASE UNDOUBTEDLY BEGIN. THE PARTY LEADER THEN HAS 21 DAYS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, WHICH CAN BE EXTENDED FOR AN ADDITIONAL 21 DAYS, TAKING THE PROCESS THEORETICALLY THROUGH THE END OF JULY.

E. IF A GOVERNMENT HAS STILL NOT BEEN FORMED, THE PRESI-

DENT MAY THEN ASK ANOTHER PARLIMENTARIAN, IN ALL

PROBABILITY PERES, TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. HE THEN HAS UP
TO 42 DAYS TO TRY TO FORM A GOVERNMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 114445 TOSEC 040330

F. IF A GOVERNMENT HAS STILL NOT BEEN FORMED AFTER THIS,
THE KNESSET WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD BE DISOLVED AND NEW
ELECTIONS CALLED.

5. ALTHOUGH A NEW GOVERNMENT COULD THEORETICALLY BE
FORMED BY THE SECOND WEEK IN JUNE, WE EXPECT THE PROCESS
TO EXTEND THROUGH MUAH OF THE SUMMER. CHRISTOPHER

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